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### The Accademia del Cimento and its European Context

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stati nazionali. Non sembra tuttavia storicamente lecito, nella prima età moderna, identificare le nascenti Congregazioni romane con la «Catholic Church» dato che esse avevano un impatto assai limitato su ampie parti della 'cattolicità' (Spagna, Francia, parti cattoliche dell'Impero). Inoltre, pare inadeguato dare risposte a tali quesiti come tenta la prefazione al volume del cardinale Georges Cottier, a partire da documenti cinquecenteschi che sono il prodotto di un differente mondo culturale per il quale l'oggetto 'scienza' non aveva il significato che acquisì nell'Ottocento.

I documenti pubblicati permettono invece – come lo sottolineano gli stessi Curatori (pp. 85-91) – di delineare la cultura scolastica dei censori e di ricostruire i meccanismi messi da loro in opera per imporre la propria cultura all'insieme dei rappresentanti del sapere, sia esso medico, magico o astrologico, nella penisola italiana. Appare così uno scontro fra rappresentanti di culture concorrenti che si manifesta con acuità nell'impossibile impresa di espurgazione delle opere filosofiche e mediche (pp. 599-664), come anche nei processi e censure relativi ai commenti del *De anima* di Aristotele, che meriterebbero, da questo punto di vista, di essere inclusi nell'edizione: ad esempio, in un processo istruito in una sede periferica, l'imputato è accusato di credere «che la verità contenuta nella vera filosofia sia contraria alla Verità della Sacra Scrittura» (p. 1486, nota 7). Al di là di queste considerazioni, il volume recensito appare come una pietra miliare, aprendo un campo di ricerca che, a partire dai documenti pubblicati, e dalle ipotesi formulate, ed allargandosi ad altri archivi e fonti, contribuirà al rinnovamento degli studi sui rapporti fra filosofia, scienza e teologia in epoca moderna.

FRANCESCO BERETTA

MARCO BERETTA – ANTONIO CLERICUZIO – LAWRENCE M. PRINCIPE (eds.), *The Accademia del Cimento and its European*

*Context*. Sagamore Beach: Science History Publications, 2009. XIII+257 pp., ISBN: 0-88135-387-6.

The fifteen essays in this extremely worthwhile volume derive from papers delivered at a conference to celebrate the 350<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Accademia del Cimento held at Florence in December 2007, and to launch on the website of the Institute and Museum of the History of Science in Florence the Cimento Academy website (making available on-line a number of editions of the *Saggi di naturali esperienze*, and over 1700 manuscripts – <http://fermi.imss.fi.it/rd/bd?progetto=583&lng=eng>). Although the work of many hands, its close focus on the Accademia and its historical context effectively makes it a book-length study to stand alongside W. E. Knowles Middleton's *The Experimenters* (Baltimore, 1971), Susana Gómez's *Le passioni degli atomi* (Florence, 1997) and Luchiano Boschiero's *Experiment and Natural Philosophy in Seventeenth-Century Tuscany* (Dordrecht, 2007). As such it makes an invaluable contribution to our understanding of seventeenth-century natural philosophy. Its significance is not confined to the history of scientific institutions, but ranges more widely to include topics such as the development of the experimental method in general and of post-Galilean Italian science in particular, and the functioning and failure of communications in the republic of letters. As well as offering a number of studies on specific topics, it also adds much to our understanding of various members of the Accademia, most notably Giovanni Borelli whose presence dominates in a number of papers, but also Francesco Redi, Marcello Malpighi, Lorenzo Magalotti, and others.

Marco Beretta opens the volume in fine style with a study of the revival of Lucretius in Italy, and the subsequent influence of Gassendi, and more importantly (Beretta claims) of Borelli in making Epicurean atomism the foundation of the Accademia's work. This is followed by a revealing account of Borelli's chemical investigations

by Antonio Clericuzio. Borelli's anatomical investigations form the main focus of Maria Conforti's *Experimenters' anatomy*, but she compares this with work in Pisa, notably Carlo Fracassati's 'chirurgia infusoria' (injection of liquids into the blood vessels), and Lorenzo Bellini's iatromechanism. Gómez recounts the attempts in the Cimento to establish experimentally the corpuscular nature of light, while Stefania Montacutelli offers a fascinating study of how Borelli's hypotheses on the nature of the air led him to the belief that «the ability to regularly beat time was an intrinsic feature of any natural phenomenon» (p. 72). Giorgio Strano revisits the attempt to decide between rival interpretations of the observations of Saturn, and the Accademia's self-censorship when it came down in favour of the Copernican interpretation. Federica Favino revisits the so-called «oak academies» – the attempt to understand the supposed generation of insects in oak galls – but newly brings to light important documents held in the Vatican Library. The final paper on specific research undertaken in the Accademia is Domenico Bertoloni Meli's study of «simultaneous parallel trials» (p. 121), comparing an unperturbed natural situation or process with one in which one variable was modified. The trials in question involved the nature of the air, spontaneous generation, the cure of wounds, and plant germination.

The remaining seven papers, beginning with Alfonso Mirto's study of the *Saggi di natural esperienze* (1667) and its fortune as a publishing venture, focus on the Europe-wide context of which the academia was a part. Maria Pia Donato argues that the scientific academies in Papal Italy were essential for legitimizing, both philosophically and culturally, the experimental method. Robert Hatch uses the example of Ismaël Boulliau as a correspondent of Prince Leopoldo and other members of the Cimento to show how «citizens of the Republic of Letters eluded censors and the surveillance placed on the printed and spoken word» (p. 180). David

Sturdy surveys the relationship between the Accademia and the French Académie Royale des Sciences, while Mordechai Feingold compares the Accademia with the Royal Society of London. Luciano Boschiero shows the use of the rhetoric of experimentalism in correspondence between Italy and London, while Rob Iliffe looks at the difficulties of maintaining the gift-exchange of books between London and Italy. The overall result is a detailed and nuanced study of the Accademia and its historical context.

JOHN HENRY

MARCO BÖHLANDT, *Verborgene Zahl - Verborgener Gott. Mathematik und Naturwissen im Denken des Nicolaus Cusanus (1401-1464)*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2009. 538 pp., ISBN 978-3-515-09289-0.

Marco Böhlandt affronta con coraggio ed estrema perizia uno dei temi più intricati ed al tempo stesso più decisivi della filosofia cusaniana: il pensiero matematico, indagato nelle sue scaturigini e soprattutto nelle sue intime connessioni con la riflessione teologica. Le difficoltà che fin dai primi anni del Novecento – l'autore non manca nei primi capitoli di fornire una storia della critica quanto mai esaustiva – si sono presentate alla *Cusanus-Forschung* sono molteplici e vanno dall'impossibilità di una ricostruzione biografica soddisfacente, soprattutto relativamente agli anni della formazione ad Heidelberg, Padova e Colonia, alla comprensione specifica dell'identità e dell'uso delle fonti privilegiate (individuate in Thomas Bradwardine, raramente segnalato dalla critica, in Nicola Oresme, nei matematici e filosofi naturali dell'ambiente padovano, per finire con Raimondo Lullo, essenziale per il tema della quadratura del cerchio), all'interazione sottile e sempre più continua con la mistica. Proprio a causa dello statuto particolare del tema trattato, al confine fra le molteplici branche del sapere, Böhlandt av-